

LAYOUT FOR LIVING

What? . . . more on Housing?

In the past six years, Canadian communities have been undergoing change and extension at a truly miraculous rate. Fully two-thirds of the land over which these alterations and additions have been made is residential land. The post war urban spread amounts to nearly one hundred square miles. More than one-third of the cost of these vast residential additions has been paid through our various governments. Some of our governments are also pledged to meet private losses that may arise over whole large new living districts, should those districts in time prove wanting in attractiveness (i.e., 'bad mortgage risks').

The physical appearance and quality of our post-war suburbs is the direct consequence of one more boom in the real estate market *plus* a set of public enticements to build for small middle class families who would purchase 'on time'. By 1949 the federal government was compelled to encourage variations from this single type of urban formation, if only for the sake of the enormous public investment that might be jeopardized by perpetuating monotony. Of course, there were other reasons as well for a broadening of the streams of public aid to housing: inability of local governments to continue in their traditional role of readying the land, fear of decline in construction employment, and the fact that nearly half the Canadian electorate were ineligible for any direct public help of the pre-1950 kind.

The additional housing legislation of 1949 and 1950 throws a whole new set of economic resources into the field. It can lead to housing opportunities for a great additional band of Canadian families. It should, if used with sense and skill, lead to newer and freer kinds of urban formation—to suburbs and central dwelling areas that will wear better, both socially and financially. The logistics, so to say, have been set in motion looking to a more successful campaign ahead in the struggle for desirable places to raise families—for places at par with our otherwise high standards of living. The resources for all this have been un-stopped. The ways in which the resources will be used will depend upon a thousand technical decisions—as to the families who are to benefit, as to their terms of tenancy, as to the choice and design of sites and buildings. Such choices will

be made at federal, provincial and local levels. With the strategy now set, and the resources now mustered, we must turn our attention to tactics in the field. For those Canadians who profess an interest in planning to neglect the present housing situation would be as great folly as we have seen among the arm-chair generals who forgot about the infantry.

At the moment of writing, the proposals for using our fine new housing instrument appear distressingly timid and partial, as if their authors had no access to that literature of housing layout and design which lies ready for study by such as are placed in charge of housing instruments. Unless bolder, saner, more vigorous ideas about Canadian design for urban living come forward we are likely to miss—quite literally—the chance of a lifetime. For the sticks and bricks soon to be put together in the name of the National Housing Act will hardly be paid for when the year 2000 dawns upon us.

We are at a crucial stage in 1950, in an advance that has been moving slowly forward upon Canadian housing objectives since at least 1909. In the front rank of every housing advance there have been the 'non-commissioned' officers of the movement: in this country the Charles Hodgetts, Frank Beers, Herbert Bruce, E. J. Urwicks, S. H. Princes, Emile Nadeaus, Harold Clarks, Humphrey Carvers, Peter Strattons, Bessie Luffmans, George Mooneys, Leonard Marshes, William Tibbs and all the others. The times have been known to drive these movements underground, but 1950 in Canada is not such a time.

If by 1960 we are all to take pride in the latest decade of housing accomplishment—in its quality as well as in its quantity—it will be because these housing devotees are losing no time in pointing out the path to take today. These are the people who founded the Community Planning Association of Canada; and if the Association is to justify its being, we may do so largely by virtue of our corporate activity to swell the demand for better-made living places. Let's not deceive ourselves; this means Member-action, Committee-action, Branch-action, Divisional-action, Council-action—action now.

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Not just housing, but a beautiful community (see also pages 2 to 5)

LAYOUT FOR LIVING

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FRESH MEADOWS

by Lewis Mumford

CIVIC TIDINESS

by Cecil Burgess

CONSERVATION

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Canadians will soon be able to build fresh kinds of residential formation. These may include structures of unfamiliar types, and may cover tracts so extensive as to pose local planning problems of an unaccustomed kind. Large-scale and varied residential development was made possible in the past six months by Section 35 of the National Housing Act and the half-dozen Provincial Acts that complement it. The acceptable ways to employ the new public means are only now being established. As to the amount of these means to apply in any major centre, Layout for Living No. 32 outlined a rough-and-ready guide. In judging the quality of new public housing proposals, we urge that the humane considerations below be kept in mind. Let our schemes be compared with Fresh Meadows (see also pages 4 and 8), or with other well-made neighbourhoods to be illustrated hereafter. Our standards of housing accomplishment have every reason to be as high.

FRESH MEADOWS: The Great Good Place

by Lewis Mumford

At Fresh Meadows, in Queens, the final touches are being added to the New York Life Insurance Company's great housing project . . . 'Great' is a word I use sparingly, especially about housing projects, but when I first saw the plans for Fresh Meadows, I had a hunch that that was the word. I did have misgivings about the advisability of the two huge apartment houses . . . and now that the buildings are up, I feel that my misgivings about them were justified. But in almost every other respect, the owners and the architects have exceeded my most sanguine expectations.

This is the only large-scale project I know of that in most ways tops Baldwin Hills Village, in Los Angeles, and it is the only one in this part of the country, except Greenbelt in Maryland, that presents a detailed view of what the residential neighbourhoods of our cities would be like if they were planned not merely with a view to creating a safe, long-term investment but also to promote the comfort, the joy, and the equability of their inhabitants. . .

Because Fresh Meadows has been built by a big corporation, it has had the advantage of large-scale organization all the way, from the acquiring of the large tract on which it stands to the building of the central heating plant. . . . Piecemeal building by small investors simply cannot achieve the economies or create the collective order and beauty that a big operation can. . .

The New York Life Insurance Company has given its architects a chance to show how humane and attractive a modern community can be if the designer's imagination can be applied not to isolated buildings but to the interrelationship of people, trees, greens, parks, streets, and buildings, so that they become an organic unity. . . . The community as a whole is probably the best-looking piece of architecture in the metropolitan area. . . . Apart from those two dominating apartment houses, the human scale . . . has everywhere been maintained, and the aesthetic qualities are bal-

anced by human qualities; in a community carpeted from end to end with lawns, I could not find, except on newly seeded patches around the skyscrapers, a single keep-off-the-grass sign. . .

In the years to come, the district surrounding Fresh Meadows will probably be filled with the one-and two-family houses of speculative real estate developers, and . . . will become an architectural and social shambles. But a hundred years from now, Fresh Meadows will, unless it falls into less conscientious hands, still be spacious, handsome, and sweet—a green island in the midst of Queens. . .

Fresh Meadows is perhaps the most positive and exhilarating example of large-scale community planning in this country. To understand all the things that have been learned about town planning in the last thirty years, in both the United States and Europe, you need only examine the articulation of this design and see how it provides for the comfort and the aesthetic satisfaction of the inhabitants from the time they wake up, after a night of peaceful sleep, and put their small children on the lawn behind the houses—where they scamper about with reasonable safety on the grass while the mothers go shopping at the nearest market centre—until everyone goes to bed again. . .

Architecturally, these buildings have neither front nor rear; they are conceived in the round, as honest, three-dimensional architecture. Flat roofs, incidentally, prevail throughout—a happy contrast to the gaudy gables in a nearby state-sponsored project. . . . A number of the units are grouped to form loose quadrangles, sufficiently open so that the eye can rove beyond them into the next block. In this way, the architects have produced both a comfortable feeling of enclosure and a feeling of freedom and openness. . . . Such a quadrangular grouping pays no attention to orienting living quarters to give them the maximum of sunlight, but the feeling of usable space produced is so superior to that of the rigidly oriented row, and the invitation to

the outdoor life so pronounced, that I think the architects have served the greater good. A small block may contain only four building units, a large one may contain as many as nine, but always the open quadrangle is ranged about a wide and tranquil central green, in which there are clumps of trees or a shaded oval asphalted area, forty-five by sixty feet, with benches under the trees, which serves as a play space. Each of these has a small jungle gym and a swing. Each is a convenient, charming, and natural meeting place for mothers as well as children. At the end of a long summer of drought, the grass was still green everywhere. That is proof that the density of population is not too great; when lawns are eroded, it is usually because too many feet have been passing over them. . .

The Fresh Meadows architects, G. Harmon Gurney and the firm of Voorhees, Walker, Foley & Smith, absorbed and improved upon the lessons taught by . . . Henry Wright, Clarence Stein, and Frederick L. Ackerman. In their attention to the smallest details, such as the vertical right angle of concrete that conceals the garbage can and the milk bin on the street front of the duplexes, the Fresh Meadows planners admirably underlined the aesthetic lesson of their project—that order, humanely conceived, is the basis of all good design. . .

There is no reason the concrete-frame construction and floor plan of the three-storey houses should not be used for elevator apartments six or seven storeys high, possibly at a lower cost per room than in the thirteen-storey buildings, and affording the tenants far greater comfort and beauty of outlook. The spotting of six or eight such buildings around the project in place of the two tall ones would have added to the variety and interest of the scene; the density of seventeen families an acre could have been achieved. . . . If the architects had thus carried their demonstration this one step further, they could have shown their confreres that tall buildings are not necessary even in urban housing.

But all in all, the verdict must be 'Well done!' The residential section of Fresh Meadows has some of the peace and order, derived from the absence of all the things one doesn't want and from the presence of the things everyone does need, that Henry James described in that fine, prophetic apologia for modern architecture. 'The Great Good Place', a place composed of buildings 'all beautiful with omission,' a place where 'all sorts of freedoms' are enjoyed, a place where one may have one's fill of sunlight and green lawn and sky and trees, where there is aesthetic and spiritual composure. As individual buildings, these duplexes and apartment houses are not superlatively good architecture; indeed their aesthetic components are fairly undistinguished. But the whole that they form is better than the sum of its parts. Skilfully put together, these form not just 'housing' but a beautiful community—complex and many-sided and serene. This is the important difference between Fresh Meadows and all ordinary housing projects.

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Tidiness lies at the Roots of Civic Beauty

by Cecil S. Burgess, F.R.A.I.C.

Some years ago I was invited to visit a little town some eighty miles away. It does not matter what town it was. It was a prospering little place, rapidly increasing in population, the people full of energy and ambition. I had been asked to give a talk in the town hall on "Town Beautification."

I naturally took a good look at this town hall. It was a decidedly simple frame building suited to the purpose to which it was put—somewhat old, and from the time of its building, obviously never repainted. Consequently it had a discouraged appearance. It was set back about twenty feet from the street line, thus affording the opportunity—sparingly taken advantage of—for the growth of dandelions, pigweed and a small sprinkling of wild grasses. These good people had asked an allegedly learned person to come eighty miles to tell them how to make their town more beautiful.

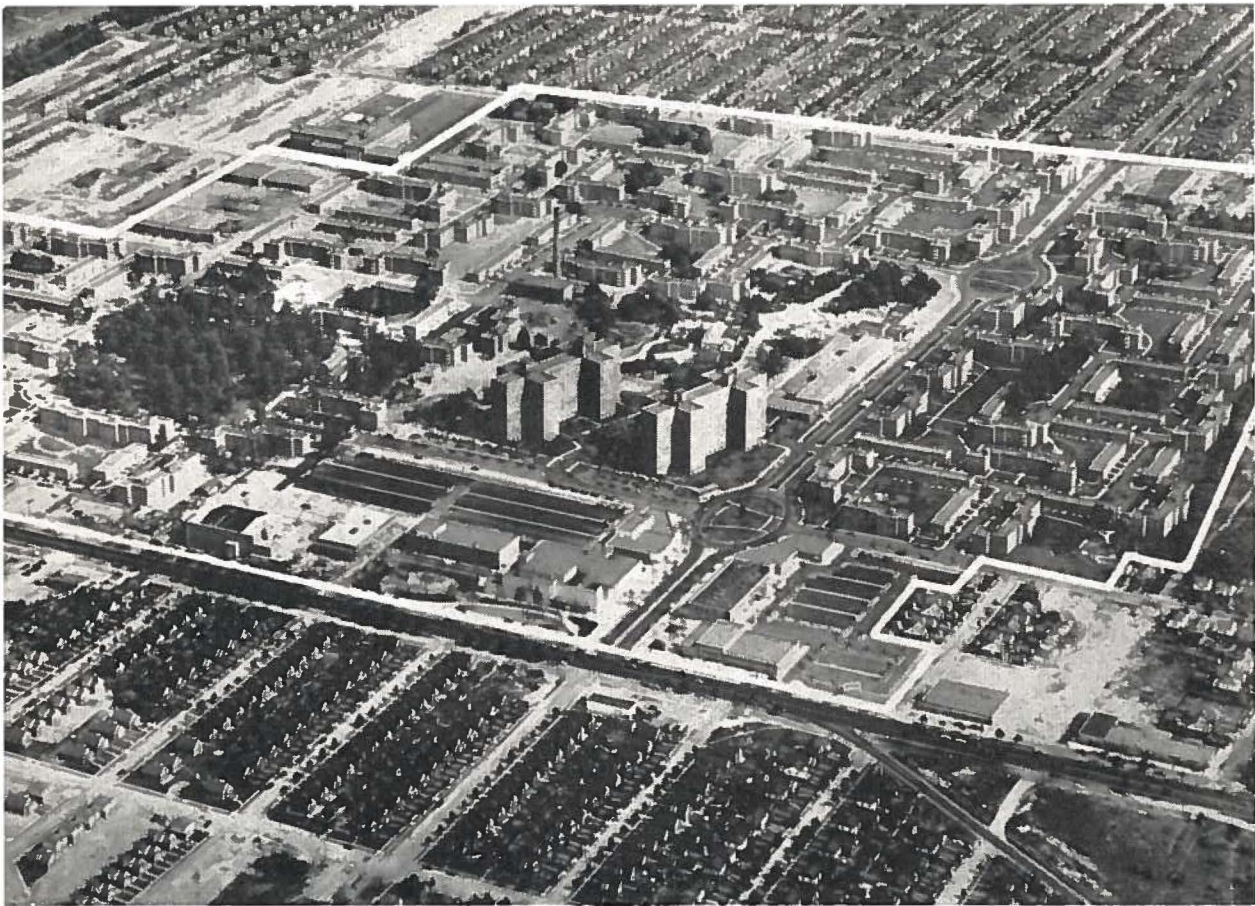
Naturally other features of the place proclaimed the same lesson. A number of new and smart stores had been built recently, some of them rather oddly placed. A new creamery and a new sawmill stood on spacious grounds, with many wheel tracks cutting up the areas in a promiscuous way. There had been recent rain. High rubber boots were in style. In these, active men were happily ploitering around. Sidewalks were getting seriously out of repair. Street crossings, having specially suffered from the turning around of many vehicles, had to be circumvented by circuitous routes.

No doubt I did not see the place at its best. With the sun shining, the roads dried up and the dandelions blooming their best, the whole place would probably have had an air of considerable animation. The individual inhabitants were so much pre-occupied, each in pushing his own business and in making money out of it, that no thought had occurred to them of expending anything on general and mutual benefit. . .

I paid this visit some years ago. If I should return to the place I quite expect that I should find it greatly improved—not, certainly, on account of anything that I could have said, but simply because the inconveniences that arise from want of reasonable care must at last receive some attention. . .

The tiresome virtue of Tidiness in appearances and in methods of work is indeed a tap-root of those good qualities which go to the creation of architecture and all the arts. A wider popular recognition of this humble sister of the arts would greatly forward the cause of architecture, and speed up the general idea of "Town Beautification"—towards which there is a universal and inextinguishable if at times ill-directed ambition.

—Slightly condensed by permission from the Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, and republished as a contribution to the National Clean-up campaign, May 13 to 27.

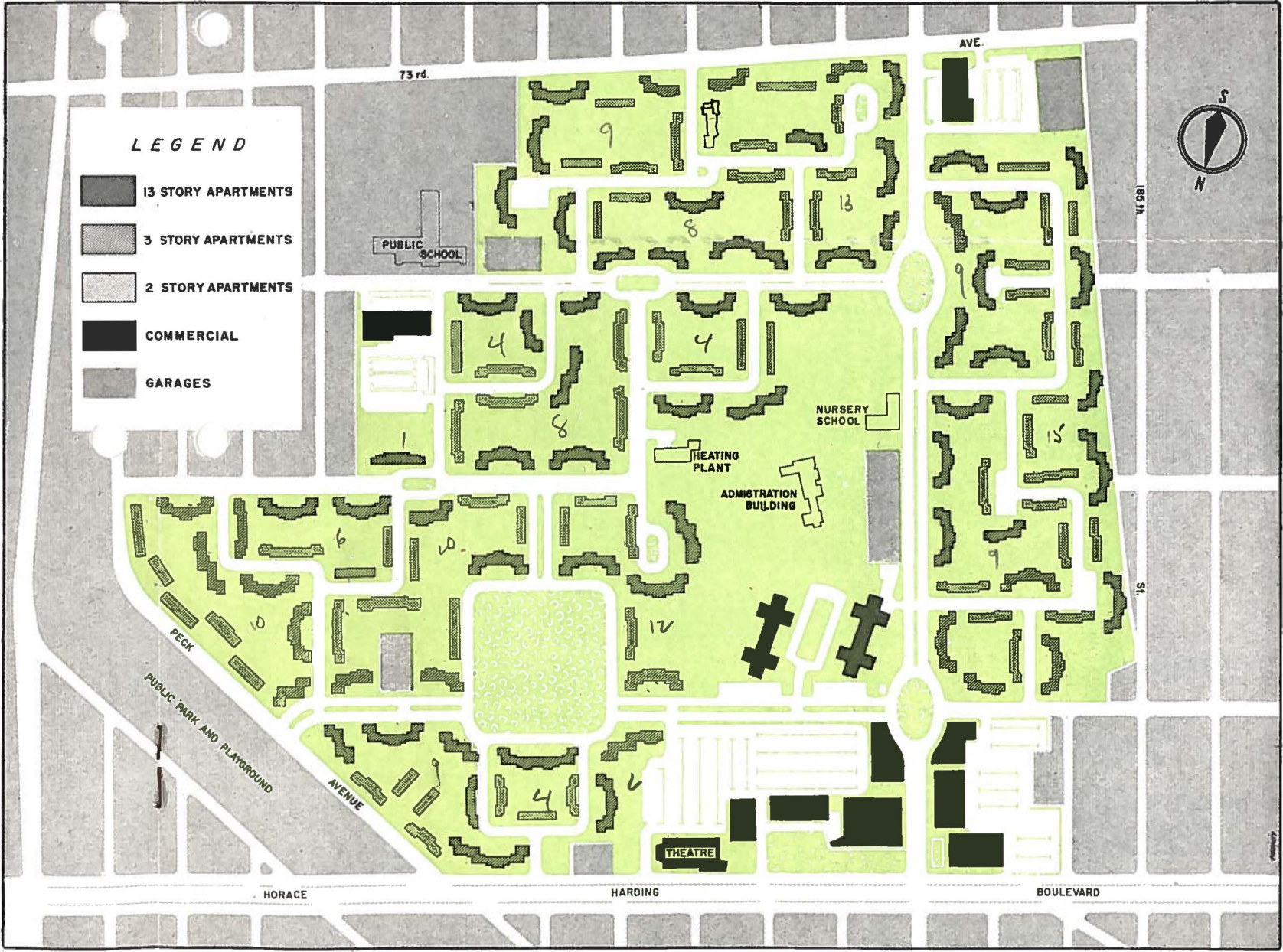


Owner: New York Life Insurance Co. **Architects:** G. Harmon Gurney and Voorhees, Walker, Foley and Smith. **General Contractor:** Geo. A. Fuller Co. **Location:** Former country club between Flushing and Jamaica, about 10 miles from Times Square. **Area:** 166 acres exclusive of public streets and parks. **Population:** About 11,000 persons. **Dwelling types:** Elevator apartments (about 600), walk-up and garden suites (about 2400), 3 1/2 to 6 room apartments totalling 12,300 rooms in 139 buildings. **Density:** 17 families per acre. **Open space:** 97 acres. **Schools:** Project nursery school and 1500-pupil Public School. **Time in building:** July 1946 to October 1949.



"Green island in the midst of Queens" . . . "the most positive and exhilarating example of large-scale community planning" in the United States

Fresh Meadows



Ontario Schools to Stress Social Studies, Conservation

Ontario: Department of Education

MEMORANDUM RE REVISION OF CURRICULUM (EXTRACTS)

... The following pages contain a statement of changes that have been decided upon, and indicate the lines along which further changes will probably be made.

(Signed) Dana Porter
Minister of Education

Toronto,
December 10, 1949.

... Changes to take effect in September, 1950, are indicated below:

III. INCREASED EMPHASIS ON CONSERVATION AND MAP READING (Intermediate and Senior Divisions)

The proper use and conservation of our natural resources of forest, farm and water supply is a matter of pressing importance in our economy. The need has been impressed upon the Department of Education of turning out graduates from our schools who have a favourable attitude to the problems of conservation and who will have some knowledge of means that can be employed. It is obvious that conservation cannot be added to the curriculum as a separate and distinct subject, but it is necessary to include in the revised courses adequate information and suitable activities to develop the desired favourable attitude. This will involve the inclusion of suitable material in the courses in Mathematics, English, Social Studies, Geography, History, Science and Agriculture and this problem is now under consideration.

The care and management of the farm woodlot will form an important topic, particularly in rural areas, and the pupils should be given some idea of the Mathematics required as suggested in the report of the Ontario Royal Commission on Forestry. The courses in Geography and History will be modified to make pupils aware of the effect of the devastation of forests on our water supply, the water table, the supply of wild life, and the productivity of the soil. The causes, effects, and the prevention of erosion will be considered in the Science courses and specific instruction regarding the maintenance of the fertility of the soil will be provided in the courses in Agriculture.

Specific reference will be made to localities in Ontario which have suffered through forest depletion and soil erosion; and consideration will be given to possible methods of repairing the damage which has been done. Pupils will be made aware of methods at present employed for the preservation of our forest resources and study will be made in the localities affected, of proposed River Valley Developments, their aims, and the plans that have already been established.

The subject of map reading is closely related to the study of conservation. It is proposed to introduce this study as a part of the courses in Social Studies and Geography at the appropriate grade levels. (The maps of the National Topographic Series will be used,—scale: 1" to the mile, where they are available, and, scale: 2" to the mile, in those parts of Ontario that have not yet been provided with 1" to the mile maps. Maps on scale of 1" to the mile are available for most of southern Ontario.) It is expected that the map reading will include considerable work in the field and for this purpose a knowledge of the use of a simple compass will be required.

Steps have been taken to include instruction in Conservation and Map Reading in the Normal Schools and the College of Education. By the end of June, 1950, 1,500 teachers who have given consideration to the increased emphasis on conservation and who have been trained in map reading will be added to those now in service who are already equipped to carry on this work. Instruction in conservation and in map reading will also be offered in the summer courses to be held in the summer of 1950.

Legislative Committee Reports

Nine Members of the Ontario Legislature have spent much of the past year reading submissions and holding public hearings on the conservation of the Province's resources. In March the Committee tendered a 65,000 word report under these main headings: soil, water, forestry, fish and wildlife, recreation, education, Conservation Authorities, federal-provincial co-operation, required provincial administration.

The select committee recommended further soil surveys; major projects for piping Great Lakes water into interior areas now exhausting their local sources; planting, protection and taxation changes to encourage private and municipal woodlots, in addition to large-scale reforestation of zones unsuited to agriculture; fundamental research into fluctuations in wildlife populations; federation of the provincial Colleges of agriculture, veterinary science and home economics; and deliberate planning for recreation in reforested and other provincial Crown lands.

Of special concern to planning is the administrative recommendation: for the appointment of a Chief Conservation Officer, to have the status of a Deputy Minister and to report to the Premier. His duty would be to co-ordinate the conservation work of all departments, particularly Agriculture, Lands and Forests, and Planning and Development. The last-named administers industrial development, immigration, housing and travel publicity, in addition to the Conservation Authorities Act and the Planning Act.

A New Forest Act

Closer Dominion-Provincial cooperation on forests sought

Among measures passed by the first session of the new Parliament, which ended in December, was Bill 62, the Canada Forestry Act. The bill received its final reading in the Senate on December 8, after debates in both houses had found members in general agreement with its provisions.

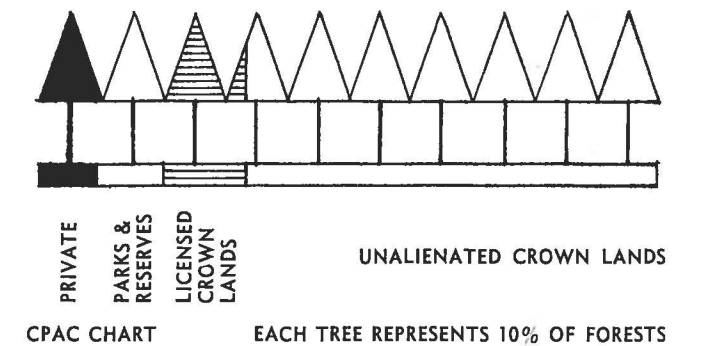
A large number of members had spoken in the debates on the bill at its various stages, voicing approval of the new legislation. The new act will empower the federal government to establish Crown lands as National Forests and to carry out works deemed necessary for forest protection and forest experimentation.

It also extends authority to the minister to "enter into agreements with any province for the protection, development or utilization of forest resources" in all fields from fire protection to sustained yield management. Power is also granted for specific supervision in the National Forests areas over activities such as lumbering and power and water development.

Resources Minister Gibson told the House it was not the government's intention to designate National Forests at the present time. Nor, he said, will the federal government invade the jurisdiction that the provinces hold over natural resources. He said, in submitting a resolution for introduction of the bill, that its purpose was to support a constructive forestry program by "close co-operation and agreement" with the provinces.

A. Dumas, Liberal MP for Villeneuve, said there should be more artificial reforestation, particularly on lands around mills. Mr. Dumas described the forests as Canada's economic "spinal column" and noted that more than \$1,000,000,000 annual income was obtained from forests and forest products. Added to this, he said,

Forest Control in Provinces



was revenue from transportation of the products, tourist business and hunting and fishing. Mr. Graydon agreed that the forests should be treated as a crop with annual harvest and said they were too often accepted as a dwindling resource.

Sponsorship of the bill in the Senate was under Senator James A. MacKinnon, former resources minister. Making his maiden speech to the Upper House, Senator MacKinnon said he doubted if any subject "commands greater unanimity" in Canada than forest conservation. He said long consultations had been held with the provinces, they were in agreement with the bill's principles and there was no question of provincial rights involved.

The final reading was given after Senators R. B. Horner, Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative, and G. P. Burchill, Liberal for New Brunswick, spoke in support of it. Senator Horner cited Scandinavian forest practice of forest replacement, and lamented that passage of the bill was 50 years too late—being like "locking the door when the horse is stolen."

— Timber of Canada

